

Swedish American Genealogist

Volume 25 | Number 4

Article 6

12-1-2005

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Recommended Citation

Bergendoff, Conrad and Norton, John E. (2005) "No Memories are Dearer," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 25 : No. 4 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol25/iss4/6>

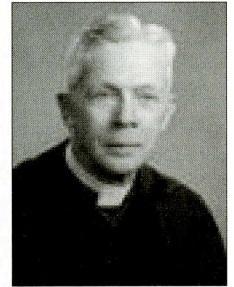
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No Memories are Dearer Than Those I have from Vespers.

By CONRAD BERGENDOFF (1895–1997), PRESIDENT OF AUGUSTANA COLLEGE

(Previously printed in *Hågkomster och livsinytryck till minnet av Nathan Söderblom* (1934))

TRANSLATED BY JOHN E. NORTON



Is anything more difficult than giving a picture of a personality in words alone? But despite the impossibility of describing what it is that separates a personality from the masses, one knows immediately when one stands before such a person – one who, lifted above others, retains the uniqueness of his being. And when one has stood together with such a soul, one often returns to the land of memories, where the light of that shining visage still lives.

It was at the new sanctuary of Salem Church in Chicago that I first became personally acquainted with Archbishop Nathan Söderblom. He had been invited to plant a tree next to the church, and gladly accepted the invitation. Later he said to me: “I have inaugurated churches, but this is the first time I’ve planted a tree.” After his return home to Sweden, he took time to write a letter, including these words:

“At the planting of that tree on that chilly evening, I had an experience of the inner warmth of a first love between you and your congregation. It was one of those moments which showed me something of the best in America – Sweden’s soul. I noted that the power of the old pilgrim fathers’ simple faith still lives in children and grandchildren. Please express my thanks to the members of your congregation, and thanks for the hearty time.”

My next meeting was in the Archbishop’s residence in Uppsala. Through the auspices of the Archbishop, I was able to continue my studies at Uppsala, and the univer-

sities of Lund and Berlin. Many treasured memories pour out when I think back to his study, dining room, and reception rooms, where the light of intellect and the warmth of friendship one experienced in the presence of the Archbishop and his wife put a glow into their home. “Sit at this table,” Mrs. Söderblom said one day at lunch, “visitors will soon come from all corners of the world.” Like a magnet, the Archbishop attracted the spiritual leaders of the world to Uppsala. A few days later, I was together with a group being shown through the Cathedral by the Archbishop. The others were Canon Woods from England, Prof. Romadha from Prague, and President Hibben from Princeton University in America. They came from the ends of the world to Uppsala to see and hear the Archbishop.

But no memories are dearer to me than those I have from vespers, as the day ended, when we assembled around the organ, where the Archbishop himself presided. Hymns, Bible reading, prayer – everything so simple and yet so gripping. In a nearby room were the thousands of books he knew so well. Here in the bosom of his family, with one or another guest present, it was not education one admired, but the genuine child-like faith which made an indelible impression.

I experienced his remarkably easy way of associating with every kind of person, even the less fortunate, when I followed him as notary on a visitation trip to a parish in the Uppsala diocese. In the language of a

child he spoke with eight- and nine-year-olds in the elementary school, spoke with them about their forefathers’ names and faith. In the Church, filled to capacity for the service, he walked up and down the aisles, talking with the old, with the teacher, or the newly-confirmed. As the eye turns towards a shaft of light, the congregation followed his path. Nothing was without interest for him. In the village they had talked about an old woman who cured illness by laying her hands on clothing brought from the sick. “Be sure to note that,” he said to his notary.

But this church leader was at home not just in the rural church. I followed him as secretary when the Archbishop went to Bern, where the Ecumenical Continuation Committee – or Ecumenical Council as it is now called – was meeting. He was its chairman. The committee included members from France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, America, Switzerland, and other countries. In discussions and as chairman he spoke equally comfortably with everyone in the various languages used – German, French, English, Swedish. Among the learned, the highest figures in Christianity, he walked with sure, purposeful steps. Wherever he was there was energy and *Gemütlichkeit*.

I think of him most often as he prayed on his knees before the altar of Uppsala Cathedral for the unity of the Church and peace between nations. There he expressed the deepest longings of his heart. If nothing else, he spoke so often and

at so many times about the church's common witness before the world. This witness was not just for individuals, but for all peoples and nations. The world should understand the unity which already existed in a divided Christianity. For me and many others, there's something great in that thought, that there, in the far north, a burning soul lay before the altar of Uppsala Cathedral, praying that the Church, the Church in the world – might become one, as Christ himself is one.

Did he set his goals too high? Lesser souls could not follow him. They saw only the risk, only the dangerous obstacles lying in the way. He saw something else. He saw the goal, and it drew him onward. On the mountain top he found few. But that was where the road led. There he went.

The English poet Browning's words in "The Grammarian's Funeral" were written for one like Nathan Söderblom:

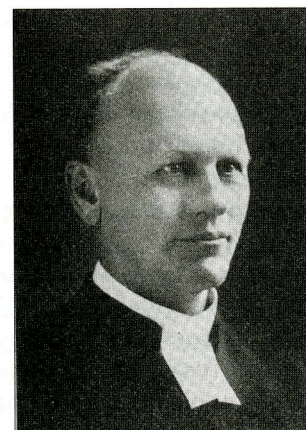
*Here – here's the place, where meteors
shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! Let joy break with
the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like
effects;
Loftily lying.
Leave him – still loftier than the
world suspects,
Living and dying.*

On Both Sides of the Atlantic

BY G. A. BRANDELLE (1861–1936). PRESIDENT OF
THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD

(Previously printed in *Hågkomster och livsintryck till minnet av Nathan Söderblom* (1934))

TRANSLATED BY JOHN E. NORTON



Among Swedes in America and their descendants there has always been a significant number who, because of their direct or indirect relationship with Sweden, have followed, with more or less lively interest, developments in their old homeland. It was thus with some surprise that they found about 20 years ago, that a relatively young professor from Uppsala University had been named Archbishop of Sweden; more so because the other candidates were well-known and powerful men, known both for their education, practical abilities, and fear of God. Among the so-called right-thinkers in both America and Sweden, there were not a few who had their doubts about the orthodoxy of the chosen one.

It did not take long before the new archbishop began both to speak and act in his new capacity. Then it soon became clear to the doubtful and questioning where the Archbishop stood in relation to the fundamental

truths of salvation. There was an immediate shift of opinion among many, and soon he won everyone's confidence and fast friendship. It was soon understood, both at home and abroad, that a new day had dawned for the Church of Sweden.

He took up his duties in times of utmost gravity. The great World War had broken out only a few days earlier. No one had any idea how many lands would be pulled in, what frightful results might befall them, and when it would cease. The young archbishop threw himself into the confusion, firmly determined that whatever happened to him, he would seek mightily to bring an early end to the fighting, and above all, retain the neutrality of the Scandinavian countries. He contacted leading churchmen everywhere in Europe with the goal of uniting them in an attempt to quickly bring war hysteria to an end. National forces were however too strong to accomplish any such end. But the Archbishop became

known quickly throughout all Europe, and was shown respect everywhere.

A new day dawned at the same time for the Augustana Synod, concerning the Church of Sweden's appreciation for, and evaluation of, the synod. In a surprising way, the archbishop approached the Augustana Synod and let them understand that he saw it as a true limb of the greater Lutheran church body. He also invited the Synod to be represented at his inauguration. The invitation was accepted with joy and thanksgiving, and a representative was sent.

I will never forget the good will he showed me when I, in January of 1922, visited Germany on behalf of our heathen mission, and returned home through Sweden. My visit in Sweden lasted only two weeks, but the Archbishop saw to it that they were well filled with sermons, lectures, and meetings of various kinds. I was naturally well aware that this